

DOUBTS.

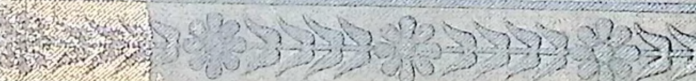
REV. H. H. HAWES, D. D.



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DOUBTS.

BY

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STAUNTON, VA.

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LOVINGLY DEDICATED

TO

My Brother,

S. H. HAWES,

*Who has been to me, in all my work, what Aaron and
Hur were unto Moses, when they "stayed up his
hands, the one on the one side and the other on
the other side, and his hands were steady
until the going down of the sun."*

HERBERT H. HAWES.

STAUNTON, VA., 1889.

Gift of Mrs. F. P. Palmer

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DOUBTS.

I.

THE VALUE OF DOUBTS.

OUR proposition is: The Christian religion is the more worthy of all acceptance, because of the battle with doubts, through which it has won its place in the world. All know the history of Jesus, who claimed to be the Christ of God. *This Christ is Christianity.* Without him Christianity is an empty name. It is further true that without divinity he is no Christ. It is evident, therefore, that unless the claims of Jesus and his religion are sustained by sound testimony and reasoning, no just censure can attach to those who reject them. Now, we wish to challenge special attention to the assertion *that doubts disprove nothing!* A thing is not untrue because it is doubted. Some of the greatest truths of the world were once opposed by strongest doubtings. Yet they have won universal acceptance. The

claims of Jesus and his religion belong to this class. His earthly life was written by men who are called his "disciples." They were his witnesses and historians for the ages before which he would lay his claims and teachings. But this history, contained in what is known as "the gospels," is called by some a mere "fairy tale," and its writers are treated as unworthy of belief. From the beginning until this day, the gospel has had to fight its way to human faith through doubts and unbelief. The history says of Jesus, "He came unto his own: and his own received him not." (John i. 11.) Entering upon his earthly life among the Jews, so adopting them as "his own," his claims were met by rejection; and the seal of that rejection was set in his crucifixion. He had gathered about him a small band of followers, who received his teachings, studied him (but evidently for a time with false impressions), and acknowledged his claims as they understood them. They became, finally, impatient that their "king" should assume his crown and establish his kingdom openly. But what a blow to all such thoughts and hopes was his crucifixion! That event so overwhelmed them with doubts about Jesus, that an utter wrecking of their faith in him seemed the result. After the

crucifixion we see them disbanded, wandering hither and thither, destitute of hope. Yet, as we wish to show, out of these very experiences grew the strongest proofs of the truth of Jesus and his claims. In a simple, common sense way let us study these men and their experiences. Did they only write a "fairy tale"? Did they tell us something which merely "grew out of the general disposition of the times, to expect and believe the wonderful"? The key to all we have to say is this: *The doubts preceding the testimony of the disciples give that testimony a priceless value.*

Does not the whole world agree that it is safe to trust the testimony of honest, intelligent men, who are slow to believe what they see and hear? Does not that historian best commend his writings to us who refuses to record as true what he has not personally examined and tested, or what has not been sufficiently proven? If we see that a man is so prudent, cautious, even suspicious of deception, that he cannot be induced to accept as true even that which he most desires to believe until he has subjected it to the most positive and convincing tests, will we not receive that man's witness? But we may make the case yet stronger. We may suppose a man firmly resisting all influences brought to bear upon his own

judgment by the persuasions of friends with whom he has been intimately associated for years past, and whom he has been accustomed to trust. They bring him some report which they fully believe, having, as they affirm, had abundant proof of its correctness and of the truth of the thing reported. They use every means to convince him of this correctness and truth ; yet he will not believe, because he *will not, cannot, accept what he does not know of the matter through his own personal observation and investigation.* These friends assure him, "We do positively and personally know ; for our own eyes saw, our own ears heard, our own hands touched." Yet he doubts. Just because it is a matter of such import that deception will be ruin, the words of his best friends become of no weight ; but *he must see and know for himself.* The proofs must *touch his own senses* before he will believe. His opportunity for personal investigation comes. Full of these doubts and suspicions, he meets it. When next we see him, perfect conviction and trust have taken the place of doubt and suspicion ; and he is ready to stake life, honor, everything, upon the truth of what he had so doubted. Could we refuse to accept such a man as a safe witness ?

To the question, Were the witnesses and his-

torians of Jesus trustworthy?—the application of all that we have said above is perfect. The answer is as simple as the question is great. *These men could not be made to believe what they have recorded*—especially about the resurrection of Jesus, the foundation truth of all others—*until each one had assured himself of the facts in the case by actual personal investigation!* They did not simply *abandon* their doubts, nor suffer the *persuasions of others* to convince them. They speak *their personal experiences*. Having personally ascertained the facts, they gave testimony. The world over, testimony of this kind, and given in this way, is accepted as the *very best*. Why not here?

To this we may refer frequently. Repetition is the surest way of impressing.

II.

ABOUT TESTIMONY.

THE *doubts of the disciples were their best preparation for finally giving trustworthy testimony.* We wish that to be held in mind. In all matters of importance none will deny that doubts lead to more careful and thorough investigation. Thus they become one of the most valuable safeguards against deception and error, and the best ally of truth. Pardon the "turning of our key" once more, as we emphasize the proposition that the greater the opposition of doubts the more keen, close and cautious the examination and testing of that which is under consideration. Truth is more certainly found and safely held when the search is through such a process. Now, it is certain that the disciples of Jesus, after his resurrection, were ready to die for the faith they taught. To this condition they came after doubts had been displaced by conviction. Their testimony was made the more trustworthy by their preceding doubts. But we are told that "testimony, like every other human product, has *developed*. Man's power of apprehending and re-

according what he sees and hears has grown from less to more," etc. How shall we understand this? Are we asked to believe that an intelligent, honest, though plain man of eighteen hundred years ago, could not give simple, truthful witness to what he saw and heard, as certainly as the man of to-day? Then common sense refuses to accept the saying. There is no reason in it.

Our question is not of the things to be ascertained by scientific analysis and "testing in the crucibles." It is simply this: Was the resurrection of Jesus—without which none of the history need be true—a fact? Establish that fact, and the fight against miracles is also ended victoriously for our Christianity; for resurrection is the chief of miracles.

But it is objected that "there was, in the age which saw the birth of Christianity, a universal preconception in favor of miracles;" and this is supposed to have paved the way to the acceptance of the testimony which the disciples gave. Yet the question is not, what acceptance their testimony had in that age? but, *had that supposed "preconception" of the age in favor of miracles any influence in shaping their testimony?* We hope to show that it had no such influence; and if it had not, then it has nothing to work against

the testimony. Those men are not to be judged by their social position nor mental attainments. It is not sense nor reason to exclude a witness because he is not fitted to make his statements in the phrases of "modern culture." In seeking for facts we do not inquire into the "scientific instincts" and polish of our witnesses. No more is asked for the witnesses for Jesus than for any other witnesses, but we do insist on as much! In the case where the fact of murder or theft is to be established or set aside, does "modern culture" so guide a man, or "scientific instinct" so govern him, or learning so furnish him that he will tell what he saw and heard more *truthfully* than the "unlettered" man who has no aids but common sense and honesty of purpose? Could Darwin, Huxley & Co. witness more truthfully and intelligently to a mere question of fact than could D. L. Moody, or any other honest but unscientific man? Science has, indeed, found out many things hitherto unknown, and *some things it has "found out" which are not yet known*; but it can be no less than absurd to claim any such "development" as enables an honest man to-day to tell the truth about a simple fact coming under his notice more truthfully than the man of eighteen centuries in the past. What had the dis-

ciples of Jesus to do? Not to explain nor prove miracles; but simply to satisfy themselves beyond all possible doubt, of the facts about Jesus; then testify simply and truthfully what they positively knew. They had not to explain how there could be the greatest of miracles—the resurrection of the surely dead Jesus—but simply to satisfy themselves fully, by tests of sight, hearing, touching, that he *was* risen; *then tell that!* It was simply a question of fact, or not fact. There is none other. That fact once established carries Christianity to the triumph! The “jury” of eighteen centuries ago, having the evidence on both sides laid before it, was as competent to bring in a true verdict as the jury of to-day. We may also ask: Is not the “jury” in the very *presence of the event*, as worthy of trust as any possible “jury” of to-day, which has to read and hear through the dust of eighteen hundred years intervening between them and the facts in the case? Testimony is not a “human product.” It is not based on ideas, nor is it the conception and development of ideas. It is the simple relation of what was seen, heard, known, *outside of the witness*. Occurrences *independent of and outside of the man*, apart from his own thoughts and feelings, intrude upon his notice or knowledge, and appeal to his

senses for recognition. He sees, hears, touches; then is able to give testimony. He can say, "It is so; it *did* occur," or "did *not* occur," as the case may be. Could not the disciples respond to all this? It is what they did. The gospel history is the result. Is it rejected because men are not willing that God should be able to do, or be proven to have done, what "modern culture" cannot explain?

The double task of both *framing and giving* testimony is not man's work. The testimony is *framed for him*. He only receives the knowledge thus prepared *and intruded upon him*, and gives it out. It is no work of "staking out the boundaries between reason and unreason." There is no truth to be *discovered or reasoned out*. The facts are already made for him. We have only to decide, according to the evidence in the case, whether the claims of Jesus are to be accepted or rejected. As we have said, upon his resurrection everything turns. If the testimony—the simple, truthful relation of what was seen, heard, touched, etc.,—is admitted and establishes *the fact*, there is an end of controversy. For, after that, all learning and learned disputation cannot unsettle *the fact*. Undoubtedly there must be valid evidence and good reasoning to show that these testifiers

to that resurrection did relate truly what they said and recorded. Of this we will speak in due time. What is the present point? Take twelve men of our day, having the social, moral and mental standing of those disciples. Let these men give testimony in an important case, as the disciples gave theirs, and basing their testimony upon the same class of reasons which influenced the disciples, viz.: *positive, personal knowledge, gained by practical, sensible tests*, and what jury would dare to render a verdict contrary to that testimony, on the ground that these men were not learned, not "abreast of the age," etc.? The history of testimony is not a history of ideas, but of *facts* to which testimony is given, and of the character of the witnesses who are "on the stand." The man of "modern culture" may have more *ideas* than the "plain man," and ideas far in advance of him; but *quality of ideas* is not what the jury seeks nor the case demands. Indeed, we *have seen superabundance in quality and quantity of ideas in a witness ruled out of court!* The jury want *only the facts*, without comments of the witnesses. Modern ideas may be very much in advance of any the disciples had. But we are unable to see how or why this should affect the quality of the testimony given honestly and truly,

and upon sound grounds, at any time in the past. Ability to record an occurrence more eloquently, or in more learned terms, does not mean that the unpolished man may not speak *as truthfully* in his homely phrases. "Development" cannot make any ascertained truth of the past more true.

III.

DOUBTFUL DOUBTS.

THE doubts which would disparage the disciples and their testimony are of the most doubtful and ill-shaped kind. It is hard to realize how they can come to the minds of men of our day. We cannot escape a suspicion that they are *made*, rather than that they *come*. This may appear further on. The dealing is with those "who having eyes, see not; and having ears, hear not." The *fact* of Christianity cannot be disputed, more than one can dispute the fact of light when standing in the glare of a mid-day sun. There is, also, a *wondrous something* in its establishment, its irresistible growth, and in its wholesome and irrepressible influences. That its author was one called "Jesus," who claimed to be "the Christ of God," is known and accepted. But who was this Jesus?

We quote from the various answers which put the estimate of him upon a merely human level. He is recognized as "*a wise and virtuous man.*" Another would explain Christianity only by ad-

mitting that there must have been "*at the beginning of the movement, a man of colossal proportions.*" Still farther, it is said: "Did we know nothing of Jesus, except the passion he inspired in those around him, we must yet affirm that he was great and pure." So much suffices to show in what esteem he is held by the modern thought which refuses to indorse him in his higher claims. The first gain in all this is the *recognition of the "historical Christ."* From this point we should have "plain sailing." For the disciples being accepted as the historians introducing this great and high character so that he becomes a *reality*, how is their testimony, as to his entire claims, to be set aside? If we know nothing of the person whom they introduce, without their introduction of him; and if we accept him upon their introduction, with what consistency or reason can we *reject the character they give him*, since without their testimony we know nothing of his character, more than of his being? If it be answered, that, in his teachings and in the results of his living among men, we have enough to warrant the estimate that he was "wise, virtuous, great and pure, a man of colossal proportions,"—there can be no inaptitude in the reply, that the very sources from which we get such an estimate of him as a

man, pour out a yet larger current of testimony that he was, also, more than man,—and this, whether we consider his teachings, the results of his living among men,—or both, combined. For instance: no one can read John's record about Jesus without realizing that he must have been God, or nothing. So of the epistles of the New Testament. They all refuse to stop short of Jesus as God, while as clearly maintaining the truth of his human nature, distinct and separate in the one person. But modern thought assumes the right of doubting these parts of the record. It would throw out John and the epistles as too mythical and imaginary, while retaining, as history, Matthew, Mark, and Luke. It is assumed that these give the only thing which reason can accept,—the "great, pure, colossal man." Therefore, these may be regarded as "valid history." It holds that these give one picture of Jesus, while John gives another; "and that it is impossible that both of these pictures, of the same person, can be true." (So, Bretschneider.) Thus we see, none can go the length of denying "the historical Christ." But they must *trim him down to fit the reasonable*. For our part, we are thankful for that much at the hands of the doubt-makers. It enables us, more easily, to show

that the doubts did not *come*, but were *made*. They are directed, not against Christ, but against the God in him. But (and this point we must touch again) what shall be said, then, of the "wise, virtuous, great, pure man," who under a most solemn oath, or appeal to God, said he was "the Christ, the Son of God"? This he distinctly does, as shown in the "valid history" of both Matthew and Mark. Would a "wise, virtuous, great and pure man" make such a statement, under oath, if it were not true? Would not the wisdom, virtue, greatness and purity, all combined in him, make it impossible that he should be so suffering from self-deception as to swear to an imagination, and that he should so debase himself as to swear, knowingly, to a falsehood of the most glaring kind?

It is impossible for the honest reader of Matthew, Mark and Luke (the "valid histories,") not to see that Jesus there claims to be God as truly as in John or elsewhere. He goes about, continually and publicly, doing the works of God, and receiving the praise for himself which could belong only to God. "Who can forgive sins but God only?" In the face of that question Jesus forgives sins. Three times, by the three writers, it is recorded. Was Jesus "wise, virtuous, great

and pure"? Yes; that has no shadow of denial. Then, when he allowed himself to be put into God's place, as a wonder-worker, he *lost his moral character if he was not what he claimed to be*. How can we escape this conclusion? The divine claims of Jesus are by no means wholly dependent upon John's record. But the objections, which would exclude John's testimony, *are a mere pretense, else there would not be such efforts made to explain away the divine works which he ascribes to Jesus*. Why criticise what John says if it is not *felt* to be valid "history"? But at what expense the hostile criticisms are made! *They murder the "good and pure man."* This "good man" is, for instance, represented as entertaining and being party to a *trick* in the resurrection of Lazarus. It is like this: "Lazarus only *feigned* death; got himself put into the tomb, etc., etc., and Jesus, *knowing all about it*, comes and pretends that *he raises him from the dead*. The sisters, and all, fall into this plan to give a *boom* to the career of Jesus!" When his critics got up this "explanation" of the resurrection of Lazarus, did they *forget the high moral character they had found in Jesus*?

Again: Did Jesus raise to life the dead son of the widow of Nain, as Luke reports? Undoubt-

edly; for does not Luke give us "valid history"? But Jesus was praised as God in that transaction—by some certainly. For while some praised him as a great "prophet," others said "God hath visited his people." Their full persuasion was that God had done this work of wonders! It was, in the case of Lazarus and this youth, *actual death, and actual resurrection*, or Jesus played the low part of allowing himself to be praised for doing the work of God when he knew he did not do it. But this latter idea is intolerable, even to some who would rob him of his divine claims; and among them we find a defence of his character, in view of any such calumny.

Again : It cannot be denied that the historians of Jesus did ascribe to him the nature and power of God, and record "many wonderful works" as being done by him in that character. Are these records truthful? If they are, then the disciples—those associates of Jesus—were good and honest men. But if those writers were capable of inventing what they wrote, then further capable of palming it off upon the world as the truth, it requires but little thought to conclude that the confessedly good and pure Jesus selected a very bad set of men for his intimate friends, companions and followers. And what is the whole of it, on

the part of these doubt-makers, but "playing fast and loose"? Now: Jesus is pure and good when it suits them so to recognize him. Again: He is a trickster and a blunderer, if that view stands to their purpose better.

The records are "valid history" when the *mere man* is sought, but only "legends, idle tales" when they point too strongly to the God in Jesus! And did not the same men write all? The denials and doubts have no existence except when Jesus may be proved true in his higher claims; then they destroy the "great and good man" whom they had found! Now and then it is suggested that these writers *invented* the Jesus of their history. And who ever "invented" something greater than his own mind? They could not have *stolen* Jesus; for the world never before had such a character in it. The conception of him is evidently above the highest flight of human imagination. Yet, there he is. Yes, and immeasurably above those whose writings introduce him to us. He who can say that a set of Galilean fishermen created such a being in their own imaginations, can merit nothing but ridicule. This alone necessitates the recognition of Jesus in his more than mortal claims, and of the history written by the disciples as

"valid history,"—*all of it*. To follow out this train of thought, as we have not space within our prescribed limits to do, must lead the thinker to give Jesus the place claimed for him, and to conclude that this being received no more than his own, when accepting the confession which distinguished him as above the greatest prophets—"Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." This was said to him, and he approved it as true.

IV.

THE STRUGGLE OF THE DISCIPLES.

EVEN a passing glance at the disciples of Jesus after his crucifixion shows us that doubtings have not been confined to the "sphere of scepticism." On the human side, doubts were the birth-throes of the Christian religion. How many have realized that our only source of knowledge, in things lying at the beginning of its history, is in the men who had doubted the truth of Christ's claims even more completely than does the veriest sceptic of our age? *None ever doubted more fully nor more sincerely than did the disciples of Jesus after his crucifixion.* Could they have seen what is before our eyes—the marvelous development and growth of Christianity—it would have been like another Patmos revelation to them. But it was theirs to see the seed fall into the ground and die. The harvest, which was to come from the seed-death, was hidden from their sight; yet they did live to see the "blade" spring up; which was promise of "the full corn in the ear." Then they gave us "the

historical Christ." Do we forget that they did not write that history until long after the resurrection? They put no pen to paper until full faith had found life after the pains of doubt. Then they introduced to us "the great creed," which has eighteen centuries at its back. In turning to our converse with these true and sincere doubters, we present four facts which will not be disputed :

1. Jesus of Nazareth, claiming to be the Christ of God, did live.
2. He was put to death by crucifixion.
3. He was buried in the manner of that time.
4. On the third day (by Jewish count) there was a report of his resurrection.

Was this report true or false? It was not at first believed by any, not even by the disciples of Jesus; not *some*, but, as the history shows, every one of those disciples refused to give credit to the report. They could not entertain the thought that the resurrection was possible. Those who study the history at this point will not consider that statement extravagant. Not one was found to so much as suggest that the report might be true. Let us now grasp the thought that, above all things, the resurrection of Jesus was the one thing needful for his disciples. Then what could

be more natural than that they should fervently desire the report of it to be true? Of all men on earth, they had the greatest reasons for desiring such an occurrence. However much they may have fallen short of right conceptions of him and his mission; however earthly and dwarfed their ideas of the kingdom he had proclaimed, all their hopes were centred in him, and without him their future was utterly blighted. And what a grateful deliverance from unsparing ridicule, as followers of an "impostor," that resurrection would give! Can we not understand these things? But, above all this, what a triumphant justification of their course, as followers of Jesus, would be given!

Surely, if ever men could be pardoned for hasty conclusions and the exercise of faith upon insufficient grounds, those disciples would have deserved charitable judgment had they gladly accepted the report of resurrection without waiting to have faith compelled by undeniable proofs. But *had they not doubted and waited*, even a child would be able to call their testimony in question. The world would have reason to say: "Such witnesses are not good. They believed because they wanted to do so. It was to their advantage. They were ruled by impulse, feeling, excitement," etc. As the matter now stands, no-

thing of the kind can be said. The study of their experiences shows that none ever had more doubts or were more completely ruled by them. We see them not only driven to utter despair about Jesus, whom they had so fondly hoped would have "delivered Israel," but they met the report of his resurrection with positive scepticism. And how long did they doubt? Up to the very moment of the ascension of Jesus "some doubted."

Matthew (xxviii. 16, 17) tells of the final meeting between the risen Jesus and his disciples. "And when they saw him, they worshipped him; but some doubted." These last three words put the one needed touch upon the evidence for truths of infinite value. In order to appreciate fully the weight of the evidence, the circumstances under which it was at last secured must be understood. When the risen Jesus showed himself to one or two of the disciples, giving them convincing proofs of his resurrection, these hastened to tell others. And their news was received with doubts, denials and unbelief! All that was in their power they did to persuade and convince their fellow-disciples, but to no purpose. They said: "Jesus is risen! *We know it is so*, for we have seen and talked with him." Yet, "some doubted." One by one accepted the truth, but

only as each *saw Jesus for himself*. Do we not see how hard it was for them to believe? Even after the forty days, during which Jesus went in and out among them; and in the very presence of Jesus on the mount of the ascension, hearing him, seeing their own friends and brethren worshipping him in a perfect joy of faith, some still doubted! What does this tell us? That these men were careful, prudent, honest, suspicious of deception, and to such a degree that they would not, even at the risk of being deemed unreasonable and foolish, suffer themselves to be deceived. They were obstinate doubters to the extent of being afraid of favorable appearances. It assures us that the best arranged deception could not have been imposed upon them; that they would not impose an uncertain thing upon others; and that they were cool-headed, honest men, keeping their senses about them, and *who would tell the truth, or nothing*. To accept the resurrection report, they *must know it to be the truth*. Would not the world be better for listening to only such witnesses as these? Do the experiences of the disciples warrant the saying, "the devout and passionate fancy of a few mourning Galileans begot the exquisite fable of the resurrection"? Did their faith come out of "the superstition of the times"?

Superstition would have held to the first impressions—that they had *seen a ghost!* When Jesus stood in their midst, “they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit.” *That* was superstition! But now let us recall the thought that every consideration of interest and advantage was pleading passionately, with the disciples, to accept the resurrection report as true, yet they would not, could not do so until the proofs were so absolutely clear and overwhelming that unbelief was no longer possible. While this evident and painful struggle through doubts calls forth our sympathy, does it not also exalt these men in our esteem and confidence.

V.

FROM SEPULCHRE TO ASCENSION.

IN a matter of such weight we hope it will not be a weariness to the reader if we linger yet awhile longer with the disciples of Jesus as they pass through their trying ordeal, and travel the hard road from doubt to faith.

Some of the followers of Jesus loved him more than others. (Is it not so now?) Among these, special mention is due to Mary Magdalene, "out of whom he had cast seven devils." There are no words to express the grateful love which this woman felt for Jesus. The nearest approach to doing so, which we have seen, is in the sentence, "She wrapped her heart up with her Lord in the linen cloth which they wound about his precious limbs."—*C. F. Deems.*

Perchance there are those who find tears coming into their eyes as, in reading such words, memory is stirred afresh to their own sorrows for "the loved and lost." Were one of these assured by an earnest, serious friend, that the loved one had revived and was living again; assured and

reassured of it, would not mind and heart leap up to meet the news with gladness? And can we believe those disciples, who loved Jesus so fervently, had not even a wish that the report of his resurrection might be true? It must have been so, as we have shown, else they were not human. But see the working of that very nature we have in ourselves. Man goes from his grief to his work. It is woman who seeks and lingers at the grave. The history tells us how "the women which followed him" to his burial "returned and prepared spices and ointments." For what purpose? And "very early in the morning they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared." Their purpose was to do honor to the dead. They came to anoint the dead body of Jesus. Clearly *they had no thought of resurrection!* Finding the sepulchre empty, Mary Magdalene "returneth and cometh to Simon Peter and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved," with her cry of despair: "They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him."

How perfect must have been the proof of resurrection, if despair could be transformed into rejoicing faith! If this woman will say, "Jesus is risen," can we believe her? When she re-

ported the sepulchre empty, the body of her Lord gone, she knew not where, nor by whom taken away, Peter and John ran in haste to see if the report was true. They saw and "believed." Believed what? Not the resurrection. The record shows that they had no thought of such a thing. They only believed what Mary Magdalene had told them—that the body of Jesus had been taken away. They returned to their homes feeling that all was indeed over. They had no expectation of ever seeing the body of Jesus again, dead or alive. After all this, if these men will say, "Jesus is risen," can we believe them? Had ever others such a fight with doubts as these must have had; or have any been more completely overcome by them? But Mary Magdalene remained at the sepulchre, for the very place was dear to her. And thus she had her Lord restored unto her. He appeared, convinced her it was himself, and none other. Ah! what a joyful and joy-giving messenger she will now be to the other disciples! With impatient steps she runs to carry the glad news, "Jesus is risen. I have seen and talked with him. He sent you a message also." But her tidings met nothing but unbelief. "And they, when they heard that he was alive, and had been seen of her, believed not."

Did they suppose that excitement and grief had unsettled her reason? Was she "delirious" or "crazy"?

That same day two of the disciples walked from Jerusalem to Emmaus. Why linger about the sad place any longer? So little were they feeling that resurrection was possible, that when Jesus joined them in their journey they did not recognize him. But when he made himself known they hastened back to Jerusalem to tell their brethren the wondrous story. They met the reception given to Mary Magdalene; for no one believed them. As they were pressing their news upon their incredulous brethren, Jesus appeared in their midst, and "upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen." And how was *he* received? "Jesus himself stood in the midst of them and said, Peace be unto you. But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit." He tried to soothe them and to convince them that he was no spirit, but their real risen Lord; but all to no purpose. Finally, as the most forceful evidence that his resurrection was reality, he showed them his wounded hands and feet; asked for food, and ate it in their presence.

Still "they believed not for joy." They could not realize it. As we would say, "It seemed too good to be true."

After all the forty days in which he gave such manifestations of the truth of his resurrection, when he led them out to the place from which he was to ascend to heaven, Matthew records that "some doubted." Nothing short of that glorious ascension sufficed for final conviction of all. Then, the last struggle with doubts ended. It had been a long, fearful conflict. When it was over "they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple praising and blessing God." Did they not win their right to be trusted?

We close this chapter with a quotation from the sceptic, M. Renan, very heartily endorsing every word, and appreciating the objection he would have to its application in this connection. He says of the disciples : "It is useless to ascribe to them a disposition to be content with the *minimum* of proof; the proofs must needs have been very strong to overcome the crushing doubts occasioned by the death on the cross."

VI.

TESTIMONY AFTER DOUBTS.

WE have seen that the disciples made sure that the resurrection *was a fact*, before believing it. They would not preach it until they were positively assured of it. Such careful honesty is the world's hope. These friends and associates of years would not believe each other. Each must see and know for himself. This shows:—

1. That they were not led to accept the miracle of the resurrection because of any "universal preconception in favor of miracle.

2. That there was not any agreement, or plan among them, to "forge a story" with which to deceive the world.

Had they bargained together to "play a trick upon the world," the world soon had its revenge, and the sufferings they were called to endure in maintaining the deception would have made them regret and abandon it. In view of all the circumstances, the enemies of Christianity must be very "scarce of ammunition" with which to carry

on their assaults, when they represent these disciples and their Master as mere parties to a "transparent fraud." How is it that the progress of the "fraud" is not checked by the more "knowing ones" who boast of being better able to explain the occurrences of eighteen hundred years ago, than were the witnesses of them, at the time? A writer, significantly, says: "For more than eighteen hundred years, therefore, Jesus of Nazareth has occupied the position, in the faith of myriads of men, of a divinely superhuman being." There is not, in all the ages, a better sustained fact. Will the theory of a "fraud" account for it? Is the world growing blinder, that its ability to see through the "fraud" grows less? Its great heart was never so much Christ's as it is this day! Nay; frauds do not so endure and thrive, even under far less testing than that to which Christianity has been subjected. Had not Jesus been all he claimed, long ago the conclusion would have been reached that "the blood of the martyrs" was a price far too great to be laid, repeatedly and lovingly, at his feet! But little thought is needed to enable us to realize that the first disciples would have speedily repented of their course, had they attempted a deception. It would have proved *too expensive*.

The "returns of the investment" they made, were hatred, persecution, dungeons, stripes,—persecutions of all kinds and by all "the powers that be,"—and a numbering with felons in their death. 'The world knows this! It is not "human nature," that men should *certainly* risk life, pre-meditatively, deliberately, and knowingly, for nothing more than to keep up a deception which has no good nor profit in this world for them. And these disciples were "men of like passions with ourselves." Think of each one. Peter had his family. Others had the same tender,—yet how strong!—love and home ties common to us. Think of each one, and "put yourself in his place." Would *you* have endured as they did, for a mere "fraud"?

But do we realise, further, that they had dissensions among themselves and many disputings about this matter? These differences continued all through the forty days, from the resurrection to the ascension of Jesus. We have seen that "some doubted" even on the fortieth day. The ascension of Jesus was the last and convincing argument. A good providence has allowed modern civilization to demonstrate the *hitherto* impossibility of man's flying; else "modern culture" would now be telling us that this also was

a deception, and that *Jesus only flew up out of sight*, as an eagle is said to do. So the "colossal man" and the "king of birds" would have been reduced to one in their abilities.

Nothing impresses the disciples upon us as trustworthy witnesses more than their attitudes, in contrast, before and after the ascension. Before: doubting, sceptical, frightened, sneaking away to private places, lest their Lord's condemnation should be visited upon them also. Distrustful of each other; though they had been friends and intimate associates for years, not one believing what another would tell him! Afterwards: standing out boldly before all who chose to see or hear, publicly preaching the crucified but risen Jesus in the very streets which had so lately echoed with the legally authorized cry, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" Refusing to be silent, though forbidden to speak. When brought before the authorities for such disobedience, and asked, "Did we not straitly command you, that ye should not teach in this name? And behold ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us," answering the stern reprimand by preaching a sermon on "Christ crucified" to the very magistrates themselves. Braving every kind of perse-

cution with steady front; enduring calmly ridicule—that sword through the Spirit, which many have died rather than meet—only the Book which speaks as never book spake can furnish a fitting commentary on all this: “Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.” No change is more wonderful; no scene in the new picture more bold and striking than Peter, (who had denied his Lord with oaths and curses, through abject fear that a serving maid’s word might bring him into notice,) now preaching that same Lord, under the very shadow of the palace where he had denied him, with a courage which counted his life not dear. Does not our common sense teach us an unanswerable thing? It is this: *The claims of Jesus, from birth to ascension, were true; for had they not been, the same feelings and influences which made his disciples as a flock of frightened sheep at the time of his crucifixion, would have kept them in that condition much more certainly for all time afterwards.*

We crave pardon for repetition when we are caught in the fault. We know it to be a fault in some compositions and under some circumstances. But often we have found it more a perfection than a fault when trying to impress the things of Christ upon those whom we were teach-

ing. If the human mind is "wax" on one side, it not seldom proves "adamant" on the other. Then the only hope for the worker is a patient chisel kept steadily under the divine mallet. Thus we go back upon our tracks to say : Men who resisted and shook off persuasions and influences tending to gain their faith in a risen Jesus ; men who persisted in taking time to see and know until they seemed foolishly obstinate ; men whose doubts and unbelief were so strong and deeply rooted that even under the most convincing proofs they feared to trust their own senses, such men were not maddened by fanaticism nor crazed by excitements. Fearing nothing so much as to be caught by a *new deception* (since Jesus had become as an old deception to them by his crucifixion) ; finding the truth even against determination not to believe, such men would not endure and die to "play a practical joke" on others. They came out from their hiding places and confronted the world *to tell what they knew to be true*. They said not only, "We know *what* we say is true," but also, "We know *why* we believe it." Can every believer of our day say as much? What, then, is the gospel? It is the result of truth triumphing over doubts most obstinately held and cherished.

If its writers cannot be relied on, who, in all the ages, can be found as a truthful witness to any fact, or a trustworthy historian of any event? Put any other cause in the scales than that of Jesus, and it will be felt that the world never had judge or jury, of recognized intelligence and justice, who would dare to cast "out of court," or even so much as dream of excepting to such witnesses, or of not allowing their testimony as in point and perfectly valid. Rejection of Jesus results from other causes than want of trustworthy witnesses, clear testimony, valid evidences, and sound reasoning.

VII.

YEARS AFTERWARDS.

WE quote again the objection by which attempt is made to disparage the testimony of the disciples of Jesus. It is said: "Man's power of apprehending and recording what he sees and hears has grown from less to more." If this is applicable to the historians of Jesus, it is equally applicable to all other historians. If it destroys their testimony, it also sweeps that of others away. And yet, are we not approving students of "ancient history"? No one would think of destroying the works of the world's historians because of an imagination, or even well-founded conviction, that men are somewhat "smarter" now than of old? The point we now take up is: How did the testimony of the disciples stand the "wear and tear" of time? Did the "eye witnesses" hold the position they at first took? If they did, do not that show yet further that they were trustworthy? Not less than a quarter of a century after the crucifixion of Jesus and his declared resurrection, Peter (1 Pet. i. 6) said: "We have

not followed cunningly devised fables when we made known unto you the coming and power of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye-witnesses of his majesty;" and forthwith he *re-affirms all the former testimony*. John (1 John i. 1, 3) said, with marked emphasis, "That which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, . . . that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye may have fellowship with us." Now, two questions: 1, Had their testimony not been true, would they have re-affirmed it at that late day? 2, Given, through a quarter of a century, before friends and enemies alike, in public and in private, by day and by night, had that testimony not been true, why was it not successfully contradicted and shown to be false?

There was no *lack of will* to do this on the part of those who opposed the spread of Christianity. Jews among whom, under whose very eyes the things of that testimony were declared to have occurred; and Gentiles, many of whom were at Jerusalem during the events, had all this testimony rung in their ears continually wherever they went, whether at home or abroad. None will deny that the resurrection was first publicly pro-

claimed in the streets of Jerusalem under the full light of day. *Threats* were resorted to as a means of hushing the witnesses, and these failing, punishment of prisons and scourgings followed. *But why did not some one prove the whole thing false as publicly as it was proclaimed to be true?* The preachers said: "Ye crucified him; but God raised him up." Again, "Ye killed him, whom God raised from the dead." Again, "Him God raised up the third day, and showed him openly; . . . even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead." And this association with the risen Jesus continued *forty days*. Was not that ample time for testing the truth?

"Paul says (1 Cor. xv.): "He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures; was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve; after that, of above five hundred brethren at one time, of whom the greater part remain unto this present. After that he was seen of James; then of all the apostles; and, last of all, he was seen of me also." Thus we have *about five hundred witnesses* specially mentioned, *all living when this testimony to the world was given*. Could five hundred men be thus called before the public in our day as witnesses to any great event, and allow

themselves to be so cited, *without one dissenting voice, were the event not a fact?* It is beyond all reason to set such testimony aside. For even if it were true that "testimony has developed so that man's power of apprehending and recording what he sees and hears has grown from less to more," surely among those five hundred there were *some* who would have had sense enough to say, "That report of the resurrection is a mere imagination. We did not see the risen Jesus, and we know nothing about it."

Did any court or jury on earth ever demand better qualification and preparation in witnesses? The rule is well known: that in receiving testimony, especially where life and death are in the scales, only those witnesses are accepted who can tell what they have *seen* and what they *know*. Testimony is not considered good when based only on "*hearsay*," or upon one's *ideas* and *suspicions*. The witnesses for Jesus answer in every respect to the most severe requirements. They testify of matters where more than a man's life and death is involved. They tell us: "We saw with our eyes! We actually looked upon what we declare to you! We handled it with our hands." *And they held to this testimony, without varying from it even once*, through all the years of

their lives, notwithstanding the efforts and persecutions of the enemies of Jesus, and in the face of every attempt to drive them from it. Peter and John were among the first doubters. We have seen that, after having years for reflection, in which to correct or modify their testimony had there been any error in it, they re-affirmed the truth of all. There was abundant time for the dying away of all excitement; the cooling of impulse. Persecution had tested the reality of their faith, and the clearness of their convictions. Yet not one word could they retract. As with them, so with the other witnesses. Are such men to be relied upon, or not? How has their testimony fared during the more than eighteen hundred years of its examination by the world? In turn, every generation has tested it; and it has successfully sustained the most keen and searching criticism! It has remained uninjured under the most bitter and scathing ridicule! It has stood firmly under all the weight of persecution gathered to crush it out! It has remained unimpaired notwithstanding incessant efforts to weaken and overthrow it! And what of the Gospel brought to us in this testimony? It has proven the very power of God to break off the fetters from sin's most hopeless captives; to lift up the most help-

less sinners to the liberty and joy of better life; to change not only the hearts and lives of men, but the face and condition of the whole world wherever it has been preached; to comfort the sorrowing and afflicted as nothing else could; to sustain and cheer the dying, and light up the grave, where all mortal help shrinks, failing and shuddering away: even making the day of the believer's death better than the day of his birth! Let those who know the world's history contrast its condition without the Gospel, with its condition under the Gospel; the portions of the world this day which have no knowledge of Jesus, with the portions where Christianity prevails, and he must be, indeed, a determined unbeliever who finds no cause for the Christian's song—

“Should all the forms that men devise
Assault my soul with treacherous art,
I'll call them vanity and lies,
And bind the Gospel to my heart!”

VIII.

“MODERN THOUGHT.”

THE claims of Jesus, that he was the true Christ, the Son of God, one with God, which claims are summed up in the words, “God manifest in the flesh,” carry with them all the doctrines of the gospel which demand our faith and acceptance in order to salvation. They are made with all the clearness and positiveness of which language is capable. If in them there is an insistence upon anything at all, it is prominently this: That a man may not stop at *theism* or the simple belief in God. Jesus said, “Ye believe in God; believe also in me.” With less than this there can be no Christianity. As the body without the Spirit is dead, so, as we have said, a Christianity without a Christ is an empty name. Yet modern doubt would give us even such a “Christianity,” a body from which life is driven out, but its form preserved by a sort of *ecclesiastical embalming process*. The “creed” has been set forth in a book of recent publication, a *novel-trap* to catch unwary souls (“Robert Elsmere,” by

Mrs. Humphrey Ward). Its "hero" becomes a martyr to that "creed," soul and body. He comes before "the public" finally in a lecture on "The Claim of Jesus upon Modern Life." With all boldness he tells his hearers: "You think, because it is becoming plain to the modern eye, that the ignorant love of his first followers wreathed his life in legend, that therefore you can escape from Jesus of Nazareth, you can put him aside as though he had never been. Folly! Do what you will, you cannot escape him. His life and death underlie our institutions as the alphabet underlies our literature. . . The life of Jesus is wrought ineffaceably into the higher civilization, the nobler social conceptions of Europe. It is wrought into your being and into mine. We are what we are to-night, . . . largely because a Galilean peasant was born and grew to manhood, and preached and loved and died."

And then comes the work laid upon our age, "*to reconceive the Christ.*" The "historical Christ" of Christianity is buried, "the ashes of Jesus of Nazareth" left "mingled with the earth of Palestine" "Great, good servant of God, having for us all that saves the soul, all that purifies the heart," yet only a man! This is the "reconceived Christ." Let us admit, at once,

that this is the best a mere mortal can give to our faith ; yet how unlike, how far below the Christ of the gospel records ! That the “unlearned and ignorant men,” the “Galilean fishermen,” could give the world a character so unspeakably superior in every particular to the “reconceived Christ” created by the highly-cultured and talented writer of “Robert Elsmere,” suggests a great oversight on the part of all past generations, in that the disciples of Jesus were not catalogued as “the eighth wonder of the world.”

“Unlearned and ignorant men”—only common “fishermen”—portraying an infinitely more exalted and wonderful character than can be conceived by the best brains and most labored effort of our “higher civilization.” Surely it must be true, that old saying, that “holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” So *we* explain the source whence comes *our Christianity*—the gospel history. And we observe with interest that to this same history “modern thought” turns for all it knows of the Christ. Whence comes “the historical Christ” of the new “Christianity?” From the pens of Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, and other New Testament writers. Take these away, and the work would be not “to reconceive Christ,” but to *have even*

a first conception of him. As the matter now stands he is confessedly *an historical character*—*a fact of history.* He is as really so as Alexander the Great, the Egyptian Pharaoh, or the Roman Cæsar. But who ever thinks of *reconceiving* such as these? We do neither conceive nor reconceive the characters introduced to our knowledge by past or ancient history. We can only “sit at the feet” of their historians, and there learn all we know of them. Of necessity *opinions of these characters* must and will be formed. But how? Not by reconceiving them, but by studying them as their historians represent them to us, and by the effects of their lives upon the world. Beyond this what can we do but take the characters from the pens of their historians? And just so of Jesus Christ, one of the characters of past history. As we have said, his disciples were his historians, and they were chosen by himself beforehand. Must they not be treated as we treat other historians, even though we should accord to them no higher place—the place of being inspired of God? If their writings are not the “standard history” of the world about the life of Jesus, then the world has no such history. It is *this history or none.* We were not eye-witnesses of the events, and we have no *data* by which to

be guided in a revision. Therefore nothing is left us but to judge Jesus Christ as his historians represent him, and by the effects of his life upon the world. In doing this, and in tracing the circumstances under which his historians wrote, it can be nothing less than *wilfulness and unreason* to say, "the ignorant love of his first followers wreathed his life is legend," and to treat the things they record of Jesus as only "an exquisite fable." True, some things they tell us "are not possible with men." But how shall we believe at all and not believe such things "are possible with God?" To any thoughtful mind the bindings and the loosings of "advanced civilization" are quite as irreconcilable as any of the things written by the historians of Jesus are said to be. For instance, bringing forward a thought from past pages, does it not seem utterly strange and contradictory that the "historical Christ" of the gospel should be adopted, then accepted as so great, good and pure in his humanity, yet rejected, driven out of the history, so to speak, when his claims to divinity are set before us? The same "historic page" tells us of the man and of the God in one. As to this "man" we are freely told that the ages, and especially our age, may and should find in him the shaping of all morals

and the inspiration of all living. He was great, pure, sinless, the exalted "servant of God," whose memory is to refine our dross and raise our being to higher plane. And so much is gathered from the life of Jesus—the *history of him written by his disciples*. Yet his divine claims, set forth in that same history (and none other), are to be rejected as "modern thought" decides. Will any do the sum in addition by which these two odd numbers shall be made even? *Subtraction* is the only possibility. Thus:

Human claim, ...	1
Divine claim, ...	1
Remainder, ...	0

Nay, it is a sum past doing! If the divine claims be taken away from the "man Christ Jesus," not even the "man" is left, or what remains, if anything, is expressive of nothing that can be recognized in moral arithmetic. It is "below zero."

IX.

WHO WAS HE ?

FOLLOWING up the thoughts of the last chapter, we are confronted by the question : In accordance with what rule can the *God* be ejected from the history of Jesus, and the *man* retained ? And this compels the further problem : "What shall we make of *the man so obtained* ?" It seems perfectly consistent with reason to say : If the history is to be trusted at all, so that we are compelled to recognize its "Jesus of Nazareth," such acceptance of it enforces the additional and equal recognition of "the Christ of God." The whole history is true, or none is. If it be true only so far as it shows us how "virtuous, pure, great, and good" the *mere man* was, some suspicion of "funeral eulogies" would be at once strongly suggested. "The dead have no faults." There is no cemetery where "wicked folks" are buried ! Is it the weakness, or is it the glory of human nature that all faults are buried with the dead body ? To find only "a great and good man" in the history of Jesus, is to open the way for the

cavil, "He was better dead than alive." Do we never hear of "funeral sermons," in which the dead are praised for goodness which their lives were never known to show forth? Are the gospel records to be reduced to that? No; not to that, but to something akin. In our view, the merely *human Christ* would be more a miracle than the God-man. We think the world has the right to ask, "If Jesus was only a man, why was he never repeated?" Neither before nor since his day has one been found to stand beside him as equal, or who has made an approach to equality, so as to be "separate from sinners." How explain this remarkable and undeniable fact? Will the answer be, "God raised up *this special man* as the model upon which to form the succeeding generations?" First, then, we ask, What of *preceding* generations? They had no such model. They could not form upon a model neither then existing, nor even conceived in the mind of man. Does "Jesus" mean that God cared to shape the generations *succeeding* him, but not the generations *preceding* him? As the "God-man," we can see how the faith of the ages, before and after Calvary, could centre upon him. The fires of sacrificial altars lighted the gloom beyond, that faith might see him. And faith sees

him now through the brighter light of the great "Sun of Righteousness." But what good could a mere man, no matter how "colossal," do to the ages behind him? Was Jesus only God's "model man"—as perfect a man as God could create? *Then what shall we think of him?* This question is full of portent! His *followers* did not make his claims. *He* made them; made them in accepting praise which was due to none but God, as truly as in his plain declarations of equality with God. They are not creations of his historians. These *only record* his life, in its claims, teachings and doings. Then we have "God's model man" giving the world a strange moral standard *in declaring continually and steadfastly his divinity, when really he had no divinity. In positively and repeatedly claiming oneness with God, when he was no more than a man.*

But how is it known that he was so "great, good and pure"—such a model of perfection in purity of character and conduct? Only through the testimony of his historians. Take away the gospel records—the New Testament—and the place now filled by Jesus is a blank. *The history!* By it we learn to interpret the Old Testament; in it alone we learn to regard Jesus as "the greatest and best of men."

He is historical! That is to be kept in mind. As such his character is as truly given, with all his pretensions, as that of any other figure seen upon the stage by aid of historical lights. The record of his life and death, we repeat, has as strong claim on us as the record of any other life and death of the past. Therefore, in common honesty, the great German rationalist, De Wette, could not avoid the admission that, "Although a mystery which cannot be dissipated, rests upon the way and manner of the resurrection of Christ, the fact of the resurrection can no more be brought into doubt by honest historical evidence than can the assassination of Cæsar."

But that Jesus openly and repeatedly claimed oneness and equality with God is as truly an historical fact as his resurrection. Therefore we may as truly say, Although a mystery which cannot be dissipated rests upon the claims of Jesus to oneness and equality with God, the fact of those claims can no more be brought into doubt by any honest historical evidence than can the imperial claims of Cæsar. What then? Does this "model man" of God, this "servant of God," this "standard of all moral excellence," give to the ages an example worthy of following *if he weaves all his life and teachings as a tissue of*

lies? If it is an historical fact that he was a man, it is equally an historical fact that he claimed to be God also. But if he was "only man," were not his claims to higher nature knowingly and wilfully false? *They filled all his life and teachings.* His undeniable intelligence on all occasions, under all circumstances, forbids the suspicion of lunacy. His dignity and calmness oppose the charge of fanaticism. The manner and character of his teachings set aside the charge of self-deception. What he said and did was always under evident consciousness of responsibility—said and done in *his own knowing and willing*. Yet he claimed to be very God—God manifest in the flesh. Therefore, and there is absolutely no escape from the conclusion, he *was what he claimed to be*, or he was a knowing, wilful, deliberate deceiver and liar. In the face of this unavoidable and shocking conclusion, nothing is left those who essay to make "Christianity" out of a human Christ, but to *accept him in all his claims*, or to *put upon him the brand of intelligent deceiver and liar*. If his character can be assailed at any one point, the divine side, it is as widely open to assault on the human side. On the very same historical pages, and written by the very same historians, the testimony for the divinity is recorded with the

testimony for the humanity. Both, each in its separate perfection must therefore be accepted or both must be rejected. Yet the question returns, Upon what principle may we reject *this* history and not reject *all other* history?

But be it remembered, that to reject this history is to make it *impossible to keep that human Christ*—that mere good man; while to accept this history in order to keep the human Christ, necessitates the reception of the Divine Christ with whom it is, to say the least, equally filled. This, or—dreadful alternative—dash the “mere man” down into the deepest depths of moral baseness and vileness. What answer have we to the inquiry, “Who is he?” Shall it be, “The Christ, the Son of the living God?” or shall it be, “Imposter, deceiver?”

X.

THE BEST ANSWER.

AS with everythiug else, so with Jesus and his religion. If we are in doubt about the use or value of anything, the best means of reaching a satisfactory conclusion is to examine and try it. *Bring it to a practical test.* And is not that what Jesus asked? He was surrounded by doubters, and they made open attacks upon his teachings. "Some said, He is a good man; others said, Nay, but he deceiveth the people." Then, when he stood teaching in the temple, they were asking, "How knoweth this man letters (or learning), having never learned?" Only a man? Why, then, he was a living, walking miracle! "Never learned," yet able, at the age of twelve years, to meet the learned "doctors" in discussion; so that "all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers." Then see him, in after years, confounding the ablest teachers of the nation by his wondrous wisdom, displacing them in the esteem of the people, until, in jealousy, they would destroy him; yet when

they sent officers to arrest him, they returned empty-handed, giving as their only excuse for not arresting him, "Never man spake like this man." And yet he was one who had "never learned." The whole country was full of the question, "From whence hath this man these things? and what wisdom is this which is given unto him, that even such mighty works are wrought by his hands? Is not this the carpenter?"

And behold, the question is still before the world! Jesus answers it, "My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me. If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God." These are the *records of history*, picturing a *real life* to us. If Jesus was no more than man, who can explain or understand him? Who can *repeat* him? Try him by such a practical test.

But these mighty works! Did they end with his crucifixion? Christianity, encircling the world as a belt of light, is our answer. Explain the system of morals, the spiritual upliftings, the enlightening influences of this "unlettered Galilean peasant," upon the world and upon the ages. Try him by such a test. There was something more than mortal in him. Those who heard and saw him daily, felt it. Therefore the leaders of

the people said, in jealousy that he should prove so evidently superior to themselves, "He casteth out devils through Beelzebub, the prince of devils." So great were his works that even the bitterest jealousy *could not class him with less than "the prince of devils."* They saw he was more than human; and he, in turn, invited inspection of all he did. "The works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me. Believe me, that I am in the Father, and the Father in me; or else, believe me for the very works' sake." Could we ask a fairer test than that? We say "actions speak louder than words." And Jesus is willing to be judged by our favorite rule. Is it not enough? The world is blessing him to-day for the good growing everywhere out of his works. Deeds above and beyond "the working of natural laws might be achieved by an evil demon as well as a good one."—*Howe*. But the moral character of Jesus and his works places him and them at the side of God. What but the supernatural could have made mere words, spoken by "ignorant and unlearned men," as the preachers of the gospel were called, able to conquer the world, so that now Christianity is the greatest power ever known on earth? Or what

else could have given, as Gladstone expressed it, "the great victory of the world's babes and stripplings over its philosophers and scholars, and the serried array of emperors, aristocracies, and statesmen, with their elaborate apparatus of organized institutions"? Against *all*, the words and works of Jesus have had to struggle. To whom is the victory being given?

A little story, telling what Jesus did in one life, tells his power *for all lives which make proof of him*. That strangest of all sights, (considering what Jesus has done for woman,) was seen in England—*a woman lecturing against Christianity*. She declared the gospel narrative of the life of Jesus a fable, and Jesus himself a mere myth. One of the mill-hands, who was present, obtained permission to ask a question. Said he, "The question I want to ask the lady is this: Thirty years ago I was a curse to this town. Everybody who had any respect for himself shrank from me. I often tried to do better, but could not succeed. The 'teetotalers' got hold of me, but I broke the pledge so often that they said it was no use trying me any longer. Then the police got hold of me, and I was taken before the magistrates, and *they* tried. I was sent to prison, and the

wardens tried what they could do. But, though they all tried, I was nothing better, but rather worse. Now, you say Christ is a mere myth. But when I tried, and everybody else tried to make me better, and all failed, then Christ took hold of me, touched my heart, and made a new man of me. And now, I am a member of the Church; a class-leader; a superintendent of a Sunday-school. And I ask, If Christ is a myth, as you say, how comes it to pass that this myth could do more for me than all the others put together?" The woman was silent. *The practical test had refuted her argument against Christ!* So the man said, further, "Nay, Miss, say what you will, but Jesus Christ is the power of God unto salvation!"

The world's experience commends the wisdom of Jesus in the teaching that he who comes to the *practical test*, finds the best answer to his doubts. "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God."

And none need fear to accept this as a hope that "maketh not ashamed." When a stone is thrown against the water, a momentary splash and ripple follow. Afterwards, the water is as if no stone had disturbed it. So are sceptics and

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all doubters, even as stones disturbing the waters. After their attacks upon the things of Christ, the world's great heart sees him as he was before, and turns to him as its "all in all." He says to Christianity and its hopes, "Because I live, ye shall live also."

